

THE COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS, Washington, D.C. 20231

Enclosed for filing is the patent application of Inventor(s):

ERAN SITMIK

For: IN-HOUSE TV TO TV CHANNEL PEEKING

ENCLOSED ARE:

- ☒ Associate Power of Attorney;
- ☒ Information Disclosure Statement, Form PTO-1449 and copies of documents listed therein;
- ☐ Preliminary Amendment;
- ☒ Specification (20 Pages of Specification, Claims, & Abstract);
- ☒ Declaration and Power of Attorney:
(2 Pages of a ☒fully executed ☐unsigned Declaration);
- ☒ Drawing (2 sheets of ☒informal ☐formal sheets);
- ☐ Certified copy of application Serial No. ;
- ☒ Other: Authorization Pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136, Related Cases
- ☒ Assignment to Philips Electronics North America Corp.

FEE COMPUTATION

CLAIMS AS FILED				
FOR	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA	RATE	BASIC FEE - 760.00
Total Claims	18 - 20 =	0	X \$18 =	0.00
Independent Claims	3 - 3 =	0	X \$78 =	0.00
Multiple Dependent Claims, if any			\$260 =	0.00
TOTAL FILING FEE			=	\$760.00

Please charge Deposit Account No. 14-1270 in the amount of the total filing fee indicated above, plus any deficiencies. The Commissioner is also hereby authorized to charge any other fees which may be required, except the issue fee, or credit any overpayment to Account No. 14-1270.

☐ Amend the specification by inserting before the first line the sentence: --This is a continuation-in-part of application Serial No. , filed .--.

CERTIFICATE OF EXPRESS MAILING

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I hereby certify that this paper and/or fee is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 C.F.R. 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231.

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of

Atty. Docket

ERAN SITNIK

PHA 23,898

Serial No.

Filed: CONCURRENTLY

Title: IN-HOUSE TV TO TV CHANNEL PEEKING

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Washington, D.C. 20231

JC662 U.S. PTO
09/460944



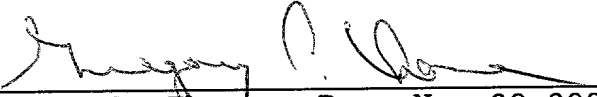
AUTHORIZATION PURSUANT TO 37 CFR §1.136(a)(3)
AND TO CHARGE DEPOSIT ACCOUNT

Sir:

The Commissioner is hereby requested and authorized to treat any concurrent or future reply in this application requiring a petition for extension of time for its timely submission, as incorporating a petition for extension of time for the appropriate length of time.

Please charge any additional fees which may now or in the future be required in this application, including extension of time fees, but excluding the issue fee unless explicitly requested to do so, and credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 14-1270.

Respectfully submitted,

By 
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Attorney
(914) 333-9665

IN-HOUSE TV TO TV CHANNEL PEEKING

Field of the Invention

This invention generally relates to a method and apparatus for sharing audio visual content. Particularly, this invention relates to a method and apparatus for connecting two or more televisions together to share identifying information about viewed audio visual content.

Background of the Invention

As network connections, such as those using local area network (LAN) protocols, standardize and the setup and use of the network connections becomes simple for an ordinary consumer, more network connections will show up in consumer settings. At this time, there are numerous standards that are vying for acceptance for consumer network connections. These network protocols include home audio-video interoperability (HAVI), home application programming interface (HAPI), IEEE 1394 serial bus interface (firewireTM, I-LINKTM, etc.), Home Phoneline Networking

Alliance (Home PNA), BluetoothTM, cable network protocol systems, as well as other manners of proprietary wired and wireless protocol systems. Much of the current focus on network connections is for the in-home network. Manufacturers are currently retrofitting every type of home appliance, from toasters to heating and cooling systems, for connection to an in-home network. Most of these systems are designed with a master/slave operability in mind. For instance, many systems are designed wherein a master controller, such as a television (TV) is provided with the capability to recognize and control a slave device, such as a video cassette recorder (VCR). In this model, the master sends command and control information to the slave and the slave complies with the commands and sends status information back to the master.

Another example of such a system is shown in Japanese Patent Publication Number 10248020A, to Hiyoshi ("Hiyoshi"), incorporated herein by reference. In Hiyoshi, two TV's are connected together in a master/slave configuration for the purposes of enabling a parent at a master TV to monitor what is being viewed by a child on a slave TV. In operation, the master TV receives the image data being viewed on the slave TV and displays the data on a corner part of the master TV display.

However, this setup does nothing to enhance the viewing experience and does not promote a community experience as may be desired by a "connected" household.

In another prior art system shown in U.S. Patent No. 5,490,208, to Remillard, a TV-to-TV connection via a phone line is utilized for facilitating a teleconference-like interaction. Each TV in the system is provided with a device that has speakerphone capability and can initiate a call to another TV that is provide with a similar device. After initiation of a voice mode, the users may switch to a data mode wherein image data may be exchanged. The system may switch back and forth between the modes. However, this system is proposed for adding functionality to a TV that is not related to the primary leisure function of a TV.

In a typical household, two or more separate rooms in the household have a TV. Oftentimes, a first household member may be watching the TV in a first room and is suddenly interested in what may be watched by a second household member in a second room. A husband may be curious as to what a wife is laughing about in the other room, etc. However, the only methods currently available to enable both parties to determine what is being watched by the other party is to have the interested party

get up and check on the other party or to have the interested party shout out to the other party.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a method of enhancing the primary leisure function of a TV.

Summary of the Invention

An apparatus in accordance with the present invention provides for peer-to-peer communications between televisions where a query request is sent from any of the televisions to any other of the televisions. The query request is for information identifying content currently watched on the queried television and may include a request for samples of the currently watched content. In operation, each television is first identified to each other television. The identifying information may include information as to whether each of the given televisions may receive content identifying information from each other of the televisions. In some instances, the querying television may only be allowed to receive certain types of content identifying information from the queried television. The identifying may be performed by either the televisions or a mediator that is separate from each of the televisions.

In some embodiments, the televisions may receive information identifying what content identifying information a given other television may receive. In these embodiments, the televisions may first determine whether a user is allowed to set and alter the content identifying information a given other television receives. This may be determined by the television requesting identifying information from the user. The user identifying information may include a password. When a user does not have a proper password, the television will not set and alter the content identifying information a given other television may receive.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The following are descriptions of embodiments of the present invention that when taken in conjunction with the following drawings will demonstrate the above noted features and advantages, as well as further ones. It should be expressly understood that the drawings are included for illustrative purposes and do not represent the scope of the present invention.

The invention is best understood in conjunction with the accompanying drawing in which:

FIG. 1 shows an illustrative peer-to-peer TV system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 shows an illustrative peer-to-peer TV system in accordance with an alternate embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 3 shows a flow diagram of a process in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

FIG. 1 shows a peer-to-peer television system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. As shown, televisions (TVs) 10A, ..., 10N are interconnected via a bi-directional connection 20. The connection 20 may be any system for interconnecting devices that is capable of supporting bi-directional communications including an Internet connection, a local area network (LAN), an in-home network, etc. In this embodiment, the TVs 10A, ..., 10N each contain a processor 30 for operating in accordance with this invention. FIG. 2 shows another embodiment of the present invention wherein processors 30A, ..., 30N are separate from TVs 10A, ..., 10N. In either of the embodiments shown in FIGs. 2 and 3, the processors 30 operate similarly.

FIG. 3 shows a flow diagram that together with FIGs. 1 and 2 will illustrate a particular operation in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In operation, sometime after the TVs 10A, ..., 10N are interconnected, any of a registration system, query system, mediation system, etc., may be utilized for identifying the TVs 10A, ..., 10N to each other TV as shown in act 40. During the identification process, at least one of a mediator 35, and each of the processors 30 is provided with identifying information for each of the TVs 10A, ..., 10N. In addition, at least one of the mediator 35, and each of the processors 30 may be provided with information on the transmission capabilities of the connection 20. For example, any of the currently existing connecting systems are sufficient for the transmission of querying information and content identifying information. However, a higher transmission capability may be required to support transmission of a sample of currently viewed content as described in more detail below. Further, at this time or some future time, at least one of the mediator 35, and each of the processors 30 may be provided with information as to whether a given TV will share content identifying information with another given TV as described in more detail below.

In act 50, sometime after at least two of the TVs 10A, ..., 10N are identified each to the other, the processor 30 from one identified TV may send a query to the processor 30 of another identified TV. The query may include a request for current channel tuning information of the queried TV, a request for current viewed content identification information, etc. In addition, in a case wherein the connection 20 can support it, the query may include a request for a current content sample from the queried TV. The content sample may include single or multiple frame(s) of currently viewed content depending on the query request and the capabilities of the connection 20.

In act 60, the processor 30 of the queried TV determines the query compliance status of the querying TV to determine whether the querying TV is enabled to receive the queried information. The query compliance information may typically be provided by a queried TV user and may be altered either freely or after complying with a security restriction by the queried TV user.

There are many instances wherein the queried TV user will not want to share content identifying information with a party watching another television in another room. For example, in a case wherein a parent is viewing content of a mature nature, the

parent may choose to not have a currently viewed TV comply with a query from a TV that is being viewed by a child. During a later time, the parent may wish to change the currently viewed TV to comply with a query request. Accordingly, the query compliance status may be changed at will.

In another embodiment, a user may be required to comply with a security restriction, such as entering a password, prior to being enabled to change the query compliance status of a given TV. In this way, in a case wherein a child is watching mature content on a TV, the child can be deterred from altering the query compliance status of the given TV to not comply with a query from a parent's TV. The query compliance status may default to enabling a query from each of the TVs 10A, ..., 10N, may default to not enabling a query from each of the TVs 10A, ..., 10N, or may require user input to determine the query compliance status for each of the combination of the TVs 10A, ..., 10N.

In yet another embodiment, a querying TV may only be allowed to receive certain types of queried information. For example, a parent may set a query compliance status to comply with a query for content identifying information from a child's TV. However, at the same time, the parent may also restrict the

query compliance status to not comply with a request for a content sample. When a queried TV is set to not comply or not comply fully with a query request from a given querying TV, the processor 30 of the queried TV may send the current query compliance status of the querying TV. In addition, together with the query compliance status, the queried TV may also send enabled content identifying information. In another embodiment, the processor 30 of the queried TV may simply send to the querying TV any, if at all, enabled content identifying information.

In act 70, when the query compliance status of the queried TV is enabled to provide some information to a querying TV, the processor 30 of the queried TV samples the currently viewed content to determine the content identifying information requested by the querying TV. In act 80, the queried TV transmits enabled content identifying information to the querying TV. In a case wherein a request is made for multiple frame samples of the currently viewed content and the connection 20 may support it, then the processor 30 of the queried TV may begin transmitting frame samples to the querying TV while sampling further frame samples.

It should be noted that since the TVs 10A, ..., 10N operate in a peer-to-peer mode, any queried TV that is enabled to provide information to a querying TV, will provide the queried information. Accordingly, the leisure application of the TVs 10A, ..., 10N is thereby increased.

Finally, the above-discussion is intended to be merely illustrative of the invention. Those having ordinary skill in the art may devise numerous alternative embodiments that are within the scope of the present invention without departing from the spirit and scope of the following claims. For example, in step 60 above, although it is stated that the processor 30 of the queried TV determines the query compliance status of the querying TV, clearly the mediator 35 may perform this act. In fact, in other embodiments the mediator 35 may be responsible for other portions or all of the above-described system attributed to the processor 30. In these embodiments, the processor 30 and the TVs 10A, ..., 10N may merely present a user interface to the user for setting the query compliance status and for initiating a query.

In addition, the connection 20 may represent a connection that exits a house (e.g., an Internet connection) as described above. Accordingly, clearly an apparatus in accordance with the

present invention may provide anyone connected to the connection 20 (e.g., anyone on the Internet) with the ability to "peek" into anyone else's TV as long as the query compliance status of the queried TV is not violated. In this way, a parent may check what a child is watching while the parent is away from the household, or may check what a babysitter is watching for that mater. Relatives and others in different parts of the world may check what another relative or others are watching. With permission (e.g., a properly set query compliance status), real-time statistics, such as how many people in a town, zip code, etc., are watching channel 7 right now, may be gathered by a service provider or other. In this way, TV networks, advertisers, etc. may gain additional valuable data from the apparatus operating in accordance with the present invention. Users may be paid by the parties collecting the statistics in exchange for the users setting the query compliance status to allow gathering of the statistics.

Further, since the mediator 35 may be connected to a connection 20 that exits a household, clearly the mediator 35 may be external to a household. In this way, the mediator 35 may reside at a web site. The TVs 10A, ..., 10N may be provided with a unique TV identification number for the purposes of

communicating with the web site. The web site may operate as a service provider for providing this service to users. Users may be interested in the statistical information to find out what other users are currently watching. Users may pay for this service or may enable access to their statistical information in exchange for access to other party's statistical information. Other combinations of systems may also be suitably utilized without departing from the spirit and scope of the following claims.

In interpreting the appended claims, it should be understood that:

- a) the word "comprising" does not exclude the presence of other elements or acts than those listed in a given claim;
- b) the word "a" or "an" preceding an element does not exclude the presence of a plurality of such elements;
- c) any reference signs in the claims do not limit their scope; and
- d) several "means" may be represented by the same item or hardware or software implemented structure or function.

Claims

The claimed invention is:

1. A television comprising:

a connection configured to be operatively coupled to a connection of an other television; and

a processor configured to provide query information to the other television and configured to provide queried information in response to a query request from the other television.

2. The television of Claim 1, wherein said connection is configured to provide said query and queried information to the other television.

3. The television of Claim 1, wherein said processor is configured to receive query compliance status information identifying the query compliance status of the other television.

4. The television of Claim 3, wherein said processor is configured to receive identifying information from a user prior to enabling the user to do at least one of set and change query compliance status information.

5. The television of Claim 3, wherein said processor is configured to provide any queried information to the other television that does not violate the query compliance status of the other television.

6. The television of Claim 1, wherein said connection is one of an in-home network connection and an Internet connection.

7. A communication system comprising a plurality of televisions interconnected together, wherein said televisions are configured to provide query information to others of said plurality of televisions and are configured to provide queried information in response to a query request from said others of said plurality of televisions.

8. The communication system of Claim 7, wherein each of said plurality of televisions is configured to receive query compliance status information identifying the query compliance status of each other of said plurality of televisions.

9. The communication system of Claim 8, wherein each of said plurality of televisions is configured to receive identifying

information from a user prior to enabling the user to do at least one of set and change query compliance status information.

10. The communication system of Claim 8, wherein each of said plurality of televisions is configured to provide any queried information to others of said plurality of televisions that does not violate the query compliance status of said others of said plurality of televisions.

11. The communication system of Claim 1, wherein each of said plurality of televisions are configured to be interconnected by one of an in-home network connection and an Internet connection.

12. A method of providing communications between a plurality of televisions, said method comprising:

a. sending a query request from any of said plurality of televisions to any other of said plurality of televisions, and

b. sending queried information from said any other of said plurality of televisions to said any of said plurality of televisions that sent the query request.

13. The method of Claim 12, comprising identifying each of said plurality of televisions to each other of said plurality of televisions prior to act a.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein said identifying comprises identifying a query compliance status between each of said plurality of televisions.

15. The method of Claim 13, wherein said identifying is performed by a mediator that is separate from each of said plurality of televisions.

16. The method of Claim 12, comprising confirming a query compliance status of said any of said plurality of televisions that sent the query request prior to performing act b and not sending queried information if said query violates said query compliance status.

17. The method of Claim 16, comprising receiving said query compliance status of said any of said plurality of televisions from a user of said any of said plurality of televisions.

18. The method of Claim 17, comprising requesting user identifying information prior to receiving said query compliance status and not altering said query compliance status if altering said query compliance status violates access rights of said user.

Abstract

A method and apparatus for providing peer-to-peer communications between televisions wherein a query request is sent from any of the televisions to any other of the televisions. The query request is for information identifying content currently watched on the queried television including samples of the currently watched content. In operation, each television is first identified to each other television. The identifying information includes determining whether a given television may receive content identifying information from each other of the televisions. In some instances, the querying television may only be allowed to receive certain types of content identifying information from the queried television. The identifying of the television is performed by either the televisions or a mediator that is separate from each of the televisions. The televisions receive information identifying what content identifying information a given other television may receive from a user of the televisions. The televisions first determine whether a given user may set and alter the content identifying information a given other television may receive by requesting identifying information from the user such as a password. When a user does not have a proper password, the

television will not set and alter the content identifying
information a given other television may receive.

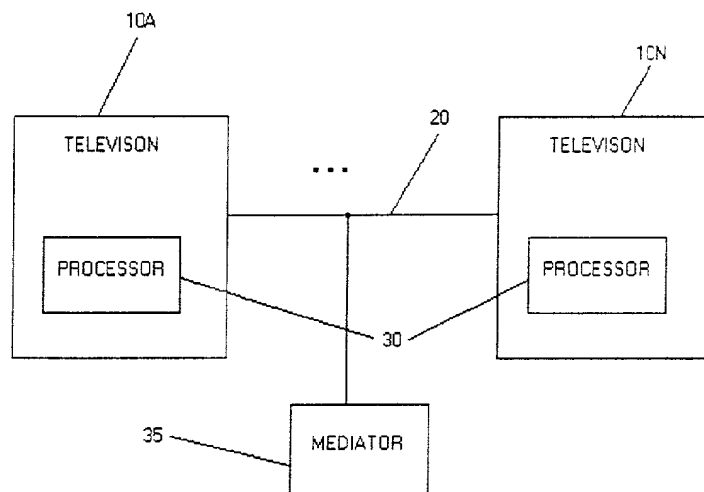


FIG. 1

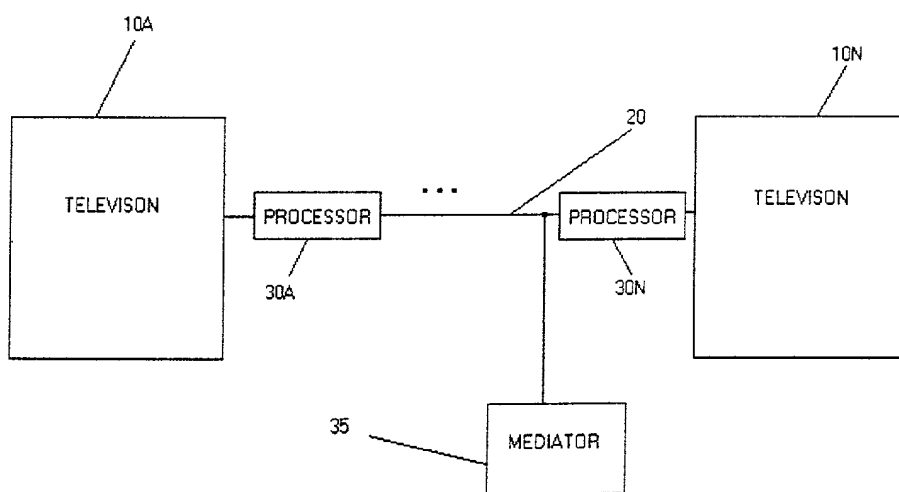


FIG. 2

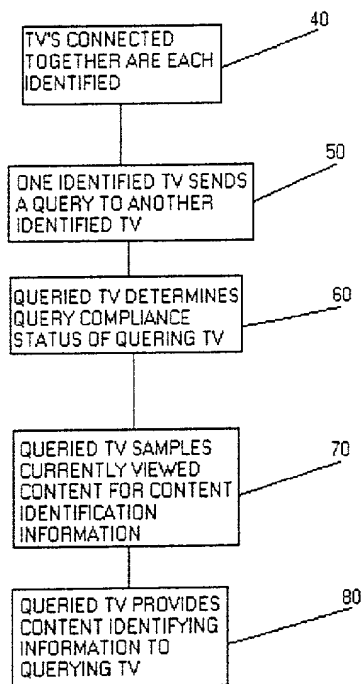


FIG. 3

DECLARATION and POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention

entitled **In-House TV to TV Channel Peeking**

the specification of which (check one)

☒ is attached hereto.

_____ was filed on _____ as Application Serial No. _____ and was amended on _____

_____ (if applicable).

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by the amendment(s) referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the patentability of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulation, §1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, § 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

PRIOR FOREIGN APPLICATION(S)

COUNTRY	APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING (DAY, MONTH, YEAR)	PRIORITY CLAIMED UNDER 35 U.S.C. 119

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States application (s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35 United States Code, § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

PRIOR UNITED STATES APPLICATION(S)

APPLICATION SERIAL NUMBER	FILING DATE	STATUS (PATENTED, PENDING, ABANDONED)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. (list name and registration number)

Algy Tamoshunas, Reg. No. 27,677

Jack E. Haken, Reg. No. 26,902

SEND CORRESPONDENCE TO: Corporate Patent Counsel; U.S. Philips Corporation; 580 White Plains Road; Tarrytown, NY 10591	DIRECT TELEPHONE CALLS TO: Gregory L. Thorne (914) 333-9665
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Dated: 12/8/99		Inventor's Signature: Eran Sitnik		
Full Name of Inventor	Last Name: Sitnik	First Name : Eran	Middle Name:	
Residence & Citizenship	City Ossining	State or Foreign Country New York	Country of Citizenship United States of America	
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Dated:		Inventor's Signature:		
Full Name of Inventor	Last Name:	First Name :	Middle Name:	
Residence & Citizenship	City	State or Foreign Country	Country of Citizenship	
Post Office Address	Street	City	State or Country	Zip Code

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of

Atty. Docket

ERAN SITNIK

PHA 23,898

Serial No.

Filed: CONCURRENTLY

Title: IN-HOUSE TV TO TV CHANNEL PEEKING

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Washington, D.C. 20231

APPOINTMENT OF ASSOCIATES

Sir:

The undersigned Attorney of Record hereby revokes all prior appointments (if any) of Associate Attorney(s) or Agent(s) in the above-captioned case and appoints:


GREGORY L. THORNE

(Registration No. 39,398)

c/o U.S. PHILIPS CORPORATION, Intellectual Property Department, 580 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York 10591, his Associate Attorney(s)/Agent(s) with all the usual powers to prosecute the above-identified application and any division or continuation thereof, to make alterations and amendments therein, and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith.

ALL CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THIS APPLICATION AND THE LETTERS PATENT WHEN GRANTED SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO THE UNDERSIGNED ATTORNEY OF RECORD.

Respectfully,


Jack E. Haken, Reg. 26,902
Attorney of Record

Dated at Tarrytown, New York
this 14th day of December, 1999.